

MDZO MO

G.yang skyabs rdo rje དྲྡྷଙ୍ གྱାବସ ຮ୍ଦୋ ຮ୍ଜେ

"A pha, where is our family's *mdzo mo*?"¹ I asked Father with a heavy heart. I hadn't seen her in the courtyard after I returned with Mother from Brag dmar nang, her natal village. We had gone there to make a New Year visit to my maternal grandparents during the winter holidays.

I missed both the *mdzo mo* and her milk. I had not drunk her milk for about a month and half, but it felt like a year and a half!

The courtyard seemed sad and empty without the *mdzo mo*.

Father explained that he had sold the *mdzo mo* to Lha dpal skam po, a maternal relative from Khri ka.

Sister told everything she had seen while Mother and I were absent. Lha dpal skam po had dug a hole, put the *mdzo mo* inside, and stabbed her neck with a knife. Her tongue moved periodically and she suffered terribly before finally dying. Sister wept as she told us this story. She was extremely sad and hated both Lha dpal skam po for slaughtering the *mdzo mo* and Father for selling her. Unable to change the reality of what had happened, all she could do was sob and be sad.

Sister and I were both angry and considered that man to be our mortal enemy. "Sister, what will do to our enemy?" I asked vehemently.

"I'll never speak to him again, even though he is our relative," she answered.

"How about you?" she asked.

"I will kill him the same way he slaughtered our *mdzo mo* after I grow up," I answered heroically.

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¹ A *mdzo mo* is the female offspring of a yak and a cow.

Our strong emotion persisted, even after our parents explained that our *mdzo mo* had been seriously injured, was in constant pain, couldn't walk easily, and was weak.

Well, now for some history about this *mdzo mo*. She was driven from Mang ra to Mu ge thang and then to Mgo mang by Father and his friend, Uncle Mkha byams rgyal. I can't tell the precise time when I started to drink her milk, but I am sure it was before I went to primary school. When I was herding sheep in the mountains, we had milk to drink daily. She was the first milk provider my family owned.

One summer day after school, Sister and I got home and found a baby calf in the yard.

Locals drive the *mdzo mo* to the mountain pastures and keep the calves near their homes, otherwise the calves will drink all the milk. Our *mdzo mo* was a clever creature and always returned home in the afternoon after she was full from eating grass and drinking water. She also led our neighbors' *mdzo mo* and cows. My neighbors did not need to go to the mountains and drive their cows back home since our *mdzo mo* was such a good leader. It seemed that she had an alarm clock, returning home at the exact same time every day.

However, one day she was late. We were worried and went out searching her. Finally, we found her limping home. One of her legs had been seriously injured. When we examined it, it was clear it had been struck by a shovel. A nerve had been cut.

We were very angry.

We asked a number of people and eventually learned that a couple living in a settlement of more than one hundred families were the guilty party.

My parents went to the couple's home to ask why they had mistreated our *mdzo mo*. They replied that the *mdzo mo* had broken some adobe bricks they had made. During this visit, Sister and I played near their home in a grove.

When the couple refused to compensate for injuring our *mdzo mo*, my parents left, saying they were going to report the case to the local police. Sister and I then saw the couple deliberately break a

number of adobe bricks. When the police came, the couple showed them the broken bricks. A few bricks had the *mdzo mo*'s footprints. When Sister and I reported seeing the couple break some of the bricks deliberately, our report was dismissed because we were only children.

My parents applied medicine to the *mdzo mo*'s injured leg and then wrapped it in white cloth.

After a few months, the *mdzo mo*'s leg was a little better but it was clear she would never walk normally again. We then stopped drinking her milk because her health was steadily deteriorating. Sister and I did not complain about this.

This is why Father finally sold the *mdzo mo* to Lha dpal skam who, as fate would have it, never gave Father any money because he was too poor to do so.

Though a number of years have passed, my family members all remember the *mdzo mo* and her calves, who each had a name. The calves mooed when Mother called them and then they would return to our home. The last calf's name was Skams pa. When Mother tells stories about the *mdzo mo* and her calves, she is so emotional she sheds tears.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a pha ແ່າພ້າ

brag dmar nang ສາດສັກຕົວ

g.yang skyabs rdo rje ສູງສູນຈຳຫຼື

khri ka ຂີ້າ

lha dpal skam po ຊຸດສາພຸມເຮົ້າ

mang ra ພັນຍາ

mdzo mo ຜົກທຳ

mgo mang ຜົກຜົດ

mkha' byams rgyal ພະບາຍຸມຈຳຫຼື

mu ge thang ສູງສັດ

skams pa ຊຸດສາພຸມ